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C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 002831

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DEPT FOR EUR (DICARLO), D (SMITH), P (BAME), EUR/SCE (HOH,
SAINZ, FOOKS), NSC FOR BRAUN, USNIC FOR WIGHTMAN, OSD FOR
JONES,

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2016

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SUBJECT: CIVIL AVIATION OFFICIALS REFUSE TO CLEAR TUZLA
AIRBASE CLOSURE NOTICE

REF: SARAJEVO 2139

Classified By: DCM Judith Cefkin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Bosnia and Herzegovina Civil Aviation (BHCA) authorities notified United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) November 10 that they had rejected the formal Notice to Airman (NOTAM) announcing the discontinuation of air operations at Tuzla Airbase, attached to Eagle Base. The NOTAM reads "Effective 1 Dec 2006-- The U.S. will discontinue airfield operations at 0001 hours on 1 Dec 2006. All naviaids and atc radio frequencies will be disabled." In follow-up conversations, BHCA officials stated that they planned to approve the NOTAM later this week but wanted to discuss "consequences" of ending operations at Tuzla airbase, including the return of Bosnian equipment currently being used by USAFE and which entity would monitor Bosnian airspace once the Tuzla equipment went offline. To this end, BHCA called for a meeting November 14 to discuss the matter with representatives from the USAFE, EUFOR, the Ministry of Defense (MOD), and the Ministry of Transport.

12. (SBU) The issuance of NOTAMs is required under the International Convention on Civil Aviation when airfield operations will undergo any alteration. Under existing agreement, Tuzla Airbase must file all of its NOTAMs through BHCA. It was the intention of USAFE to issue the NOTAM this week, and any delay could hinder the ability to cease operations at Tuzla as planned.

13. (C) Comment. The closure of Eagle Base has been a difficult issue to work through with Bosnian authorities and has taken on political significance. We have previously been approached as to the feasibility of donating all airfield operations equipment to Tuzla Canton for use at Tuzla International Airport. The Ambassador recently responded to requests from former President Tihic (see reftel) and Federation Prime Minister Hadzipasic to open negotiations on potential equipment transfers to Tuzla Civil Aviation authorities and informed them that all discussions would be conducted through the MOD. Last week, USAFE presented the MOD with the list of equipment that would be available for donation, which would not be enough to run airport operations by itself. If the Bosnian government or Tuzla Canton were unable to augment the donation with further acquisitions, air operations at Tuzla would cease. The rejection of the NOTAM could signal a backdoor attempt by Bosnian authorities to engage in further discussions about the future of Eagle Base and Tuzla International Airport or drag out the closure of the airfield. End comment.

